

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Burma/China

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SUBJECT Reaction in Burma to the Rangoon Fires

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SOURCE:

The entire Chinese community, communist and non-communist, is worried that if any Chinese is blamed for the recent fires in Rangoon, the entire Chinese community, regardless of ideology, will suffer. It is believed that the Burmese community will not distinguish between communist and non-communist Chinese in the event of a race riot.

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Comment. Initial speculation in the Burmese community blamed the Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO) and the Chinese Nationalists for the fires. Later the Government of Burma (GOB) began fostering rumors that the Burma Workers and Peasants Party (BWPP) was behind the fires. Many current rumors in the Burmese community blame the BWPP and associate the Soviets with them.

The BWPP initially attempted to lay the blame on the Chinese Nationalists or the combined efforts of the Chinese Nationalists and the KNDO. There has been no evidence during the past week that the BWPP is still blaming the Nationalists.

The GOB has ordered the Rangoon press not to speculate on the identity of the arsonists and to minimize reports on the fires. The GOB is afraid speculation would lead to race riots against the Karens or the Chinese.

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